

Delta Plan Draft Program EIR

Status and Summary of Approach

October 27, 2011

Overview of Presentation

- Status update
- Public outreach and EIR availability
- Approach to EIR analysis of draft Delta Plan and alternatives
- Framework for understanding what you and public/stakeholders will see
- Not presenting specific conclusions

Status and Process

- Draft EIR will be released Nov. 4
- 60 day review/comment period, ending Jan. 3
- Most comments will come in writing
 - Mail, e-mail, web
- Providing two opportunities for public to provide oral comment
 - Nov. 17 and Dec. 15
 - Sacramento from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Draft EIR Availability

- EIR will be available
 - Council website
 - At main county library in many parts of state
 - On CD-ROM upon request
- Notice of availability being widely distributed

Draft EIR Main Contents

- Description of the Project and Alternatives
 - Project is Fifth Staff Draft Delta Plan
- Analysis across 19 environmental resources
 - Water supply and quality, biological, flood risk, agriculture, land use, aesthetics, air quality, cultural, geology/soils, paleontological, minerals, hazardous materials, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, utilities, climate change
- Comparison of Alternatives
- 2,000 pages

Approach to EIR Analysis

- EIR does not evaluate whether the Project or Alternatives will meet the coequal goals
- EIR focuses on potential environmental impacts
- Ability of Project and Alternatives to meet the coequal goals is something staff will evaluate later and Council ultimately will decide

Approach to EIR Analysis

- EIR assumes the Delta Plan will be successful
 - Delta Plan proposes policies and recommendations that encourage other agencies to undertake new projects to achieve the coequal goals
 - New reservoirs, treatment plants, habitat areas, levee improvements, Delta recreation facilities
 - EIR assumes these types of projects will occur and evaluated their typical environmental impacts

Approach to EIR Analysis

- EIR identified and evaluated five categories of project types:
 - Reliable Water Supply Projects
 - Delta Ecosystem Restoration Projects
 - Water Quality Improvement Projects
 - Flood Risk Reduction Projects
 - Delta-As-Place Enhancement Projects
- EIR evaluated specific projects named in the Delta Plan at program level

Approach to EIR Analysis

- Because precise siting, design and operational characteristics of typical projects was not known, EIR analogizes to similar representative *actual* projects and their environmental and technical analyses
- Very helpful and informative in providing context
 - Example: Davis-Woodland Water Supply Project and its EIR

Approach to EIR Analysis

- In some cases, the Delta Plan directly or indirectly names a specific project. If that project has environmental analysis, EIR used it to bolster its analysis.
 - Example: Los Vaqueros Reservoir Expansion (Phase 2)
 - Example: Suisun Marsh Habitat Restoration

Approach to EIR Conclusions

- EIR takes a conservative approach given that project-specific details are not known
 - E.g., concludes impacts could be significant based on a single example (analogous project required 24 hour construction so could cause nighttime construction noise impacts)
 - E.g., Council cannot guarantee that an agency with a non-covered action will implement mitigation this EIR requires
- CEQA compels this approach

Alternatives to the Project

- No Project
- Alternative 1A - based on comments from water users in export areas south of the Delta
- Alternative 1B - based on a proposal by the Ag/Urban Coalition
- Alternative 2 - based on proposals and comments by the Environmental Water Caucus and other environmental interests
- Alternative 3 - based on letters and comments from communities and interests in the Delta

Alternatives Analysis

- Alternatives are analyzed in the same level of detail as the Proposed Project
- The impacts of the Alternatives are compared to those of the Proposed Project
- Alternatives that do less than the Proposed Delta Plan to halt and reverse the increasing environmental and flood risk deterioration in the Delta were treated as having greater impacts to those areas
- Alternatives that do less than the Proposed Delta Plan to halt and reverse increasing water supply unreliability were treated as having greater impacts to water supply (which CEQA recognizes as an environmental resource)

Summary of Conclusions

- Projects to achieve the coequal goals are not environmentally free of charge
 - Short-term impacts to prevent long-term impacts
- Preventing one impact could cause another

Value of the EIR

- Informs the Council and public of the environmental impacts and tradeoffs
- Guides and informs other agencies who might implement projects to achieve the coequal goals
 - Environmental impacts and tradeoffs
 - Mitigation strategies

Next Steps for EIR

- January – staff reviews comments and develops written responses
- February/March – written responses and any changes to EIR released as a Final EIR
- March – Presentation about Final EIR analysis and conclusions; Council considers and certifies EIR